

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Mohr

DATE October 6, 1964

FROM : C. D. DeLoach

SUBJECT: CRITICISM OF THE FBI FOLLOWING THE
ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

Tolson
DeLoach
Casper
Callahan
Conrad
Evans
Gale
Rosen
Sullivan
Tavel
Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

The criticism concerning the FBI and its role in events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy raises three questions which merit consideration at this time. Our conclusions are drawn from the basis of hundreds of telephone calls that the men in my office and I have had with newspapermen, friendly and unfriendly, throughout the country.

(1) What is the public image of the FBI at the present time?

Certainly, it cannot be denied that the public image of the FBI has been affected in certain areas by the criticism made of the Bureau and its role in the events taking place prior to the assassination of the President. It is believed this situation reached one stage during the days immediately following this event and was climaxed by Dallas Chief of Police Curry's statements which left the implication this Bureau was seriously derelict in discharging its responsibilities as an intelligence agency. The impact of Chief Curry's comments was strong because much misunderstanding and misrepresentation concerning FBI jurisdictional responsibility existed and this was complicated by the existence of a strong emotional reaction to the assassination. In addition, those groups and individuals who are consistently anti-FBI moved rapidly to exploit the situation to our detriment.

The second stage, the most acute, followed the issuance of the Warren Report.

While there is admittedly no absolute way to assess a public image, it is believed the image of the FBI improved steadily since the week following the assassination, and it improved immeasurably up until the release of the Warren Report. At the time we suffered a rough setback. Following the release of the Director's testimony, we have been well on the road back to good prestige. This resulted from a greater understanding by the public of the FBI's responsibilities and jurisdiction, an appreciation of the soundness of Mr. Hoover's position, and the logic of our activities based on the information available to us at the time of the assassination. The attached news articles typify the press coverage which aided us in making these points with the general public. There is every indication this improvement will continue if we follow our current program regarding this situation.

10 OCT 14 1964

hHA:bsp (5)

1 - Mr. Jones

1 - Mr. Morrell

OCT 12 1964

ES OCT 9 1964

CONTINUED - OVER

DeLoach to Mohr memo, 10-6-64
RE: CRITICISM OF THE FBI FOLLOWING THE
ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

(2) What has been done to counteract this criticism of the FBI?

Immediately following the assassination, we undertook a program designed to eliminate the misunderstanding as to the statutory responsibilities of the Secret Service and the FBI which existed among the uninformed. This was the group which identified all functions of Federal enforcement, tax matters, narcotics and protection of the President with the FBI. Every appropriate medium such as the news media, radio scripts, FBI tours, correspondence, speeches and police training was used to clear the air concerning our responsibility.

For the more educated group, those who were not necessarily biased, and who were aware of the statutory authority of the FBI we furnished full explanations for our actions prior to the assassination with respect to Lee Harvey Oswald. This was designed to convince them that this Bureau did not fail to properly evaluate the information available on Oswald prior to November 22, 1963, and that, in light of the facts available and the authority granted within which to act, we were not derelict in disseminating pertinent information to proper authorities.

The climax of this program was undeniably the release of the Director's testimony before the Warren Commission by the "Washington Star." Following its appearance in the October 2, 1964, issue, some 500 newspapers carried this material which strongly summed up the points we have been trying to get across to the public since the assassination. The Copley Press, the Newhouse chain and the Chicago Tribune Syndicate, the Associated Press, and United Press International were joined by recognized commentators and columnists such as David Lawrence, Morgan Beatty, John Chamberlain and Arthur Krock in presenting the Bureau in a favorable light. There is every indication this will continue since, for example, 18 large metropolitan newspapers purchased intact the Washington Star's story on the Director's testimony. We made certain that the wire services also carried this testimony to its many subscribers.

(3) What should be our future course in this matter?

The liberal press, with the exception of the "New York Times," and its friends will continue to make a determined effort to place the FBI on the defensive; however, it is not felt we should engage in any prolonged debate with them. Arguing our side of the controversy will never convince them and may only serve to alienate our friends and the public. Too, by keeping the argument going, we are diverting public attention from Secret Service and the State Department and their culpability.

C. D. DeLoach to Mohr memo, 10-6-64
RE: CRITICISM OF THE FBI FOLLOWING THE
ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

We have had our day and the facts have been presented. The Director has made his answer before the Warren Commission--we should stand firm on that reply. No derogatory letters have been received thus far since issuance of the Warren Report--with the exception of two from psychopaths that were not answered. In comparison, we have received over one hundred and fifty letters as a result of the riot report. Over 50 per cent were somewhat unfavorable, having been received from the far right wing or racists.

The Director has said that "nothing is more devastating to a smear than an offensive of real outstanding accomplishments." Our attention and energies should be directed toward this end in the coming months.

RECOMMENDATION:

For the Director's information.

W P JMW
10/12/64
The FBI will never
live down this smear
which could have been
so easily avoided if there
had been proper super-
vision & initiative.